

Factors Associated with North Korean Refugees' Intention to Resettle Permanently in South Korea

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journals.sagepub.com/home/jas**Hee Jin Kim**

(Bangmok College of General Education,) Myongji University, Republic of Korea

Madhu Sudhan Atteraya 

(Department of Social Welfare,) Keimyung University, Republic of Korea

Abstract

Issues for North Korean refugee integration and resettlement have, in recent times, been a subject of great attention in South Korea. Previous studies documented that North Korean refugees faced significant obstacles in resettlement because of maladjustment and marginalisation, socioeconomic status differences between the North and the South, prejudice, suspicion, national identity, and strong nationalism. This study attempts to fill the research gap by examining factors that impede or facilitate the successful resettlement of North Korean refugees in South Korea using a holistic approach (i.e. market and means, social connections, facilitators, and foundations). To this end, we analysed a sample of 405 North Korean refugees. Univariate comparison of descriptive statistics and logistic regressions were performed. Factors such as foundations (i.e. citizenship and other rights) were found to have strong positive associations with successful resettlement after controlling for sociodemographics and other characteristics. The study concludes that citizenship and rights need to be considered for the successful resettlement of North Korean refugees in South Korea.

Keywords

North Korean refugee, resettlement intention, social integration, citizenship and rights, South Korea

Background

The Korean peninsula, which was one country for more than 1,000 years and has more than 2,000 years of recorded history, was divided into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth, North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (henceforth, South Korea) after the Korean War (1950–1953). Since then, North Korea has remained a communist state ruled by the Workers' Party and the North Korean military, and South Korea has been able to industrialise, modernise, and become a functioning democracy.

Corresponding author:

Madhu Sudhan Atteraya, Department of Social Welfare, Keimyung University, 1095 Dalgubeol-daero, Dalseo-gu, Daegu, 704-701, Republic of Korea.

Email: atteraya@kmu.ac.kr

North Korea suffered a great famine (also called the ‘Arduous March’) that reached its height in 1998–1999, along with a series of natural calamities such as floods and droughts.

The famine and natural calamities led to starvation, hunger-related disease, and destitution (Oh and Hassig, 2004). The communist regime failed to efficiently address these crises and was unable to provide food to its people. This led some North Koreans to attempt to escape to neighboring countries in search of food, shelter, and safety. These escapees primarily went to China, with the ultimate intent of entering South Korea.

Very few cases of North Korean refugees were reported in South Korea until the 1990s.

South Korean statistics show a small number of refugees entering South Korea before the great famine; these people were mainly political defectors and those from highly privileged backgrounds. After the famine, less privileged and poor North Koreans flocked to South Korea to escape poverty, hunger, and political suppression. As of 1998, only a total of 947 North Korean refugees had been recorded in South Korea. By the end of December 2015, the total number of registered refugees had risen to 28,795 (Ministry of Unification, 2015). An unknown number of North Korean refugees currently reside in China and Russia with the hope of eventually entering South Korea (Haggard and Noland, 2010; Korea Institute for National Unification, 2005; Margesson et al., 2007). Upon arrival, North Korean refugees are screened by the National Intelligence Service and the National Police Agency in South Korea (Ministry of Unification, 2014) to determine whether they are genuine refugees. After this screening, North Korean refugees are sent to House of Unity (*Hanawon*), a government-run institution that provides rehabilitation and education.

North Korean refugees are granted citizenship along with supports such as physical and psychosocial care, vocational training, and settlement support services for resettlement in South Korean society (Ministry of Unification, 2014). They are also provided support such as a one-time resettlement payment, housing assistance, and a ‘resettlement helper’ for up to two years (Sung and Go, 2014). Along with this, various support programmes are available for the refugees from local governments, regional councils, regional adaptation centres, community support centres, private welfare foundations, religious groups such as churches and temples, and volunteer groups and individuals (Ministry of Unification, 2014, pp.187–188). Overall, the South Korean government’s North Korean refugee support programmes are intended to preserve human rights, maintain national security, and successfully integrate the refugees into South Korean society (Cho and Kim, 2011).

South Korea treats North Korean refugees more favourably than refugee status seekers of other nationalities. The government’s programme for supporting them is the most generous of its kind anywhere in the world (Borowiec, 2013; Sep. 12). The North Korean Refugees Protection and Settlement Act stipulates the provision of support including housing (\$35,260, of which \$7,245 is a down payment towards a permanent apartment), employment support, educational support, medical care support, support for livelihood, special quota support for admission to elite universities in South Korea, and so on (Statutes of the Republic of Korea, 1997–2010). Despite this, many North Korean defectors use South Korea as a transit point to settle in third countries (Sung and Go, 2014). This fact is supported by the annual parliamentary audit of South Korea in 2011, which showed that around 70% of the population who applied for asylum in the United Kingdom between 2004 and 2011 held South Korean citizenship. This phenomenon is not only limited to the UK; South Korean passport holders have sought asylum in other Western countries such as Australia, Germany, Denmark, and the United States of America (Wolman, 2012; Yun, 2012). This phenomenon suggests a need for conducting further study on factors that impact the permanent resettlement of North Korea refugees in South Korea. A review of the literature on this topic shows that there is no study providing a comprehensive understanding of refugee integration that

includes resettlement intention in South Korea. This study is possibly a first attempt to fill this research gap in South Korea.

Perceived difficulties of North Korean refugee resettlement in South Korea

Issues of refugee integration as well as resettlement, particularly for North Korean refugees in South Korea, have recently been a subject of great attention in both academia and policy circles in South Korea. Recently, much attention has been given to identify issues of integration, perceived difficulties in social adaptation, public opinion towards North Koreans in South Korea, and other issues concerning the resettlement of North Koreans in South Korea (Jeon, 2000; Lee, 2015; 2016; Kim and Jang, 2007; Lankov, 2006; Yoon, 2001).

An early study on North Korean refugees' integration in South Korea reported that North Korean refugees faced significant obstacles while settling into South Korea and that their expectations were not fulfilled after arriving in South Korea (Yoon, 2001). Yoon (2001) surveyed 92 North Korean refugees and carried out in-depth interviews with 30 defectors in 1998. The findings revealed that North Korean refugees faced maladjustment and marginalisation problems. Further, the study explored the economic aspect of adjustment, sociocultural differences between the North and South, refugees' feeling of being ignored or neglected by South Koreans, having a negative attitude from South Koreans toward them, and difficulty finding spouses due to prejudice and socioeconomic gaps. On the other hand, in a study based on in-depth interviews with 32 North Korean refugees, Jeon (2000) argued that the difficulties the refugees faced in adapting to South Korean life were because of their unique characteristics and their misunderstanding of South Korean people. Jeon argued that North Korean refugees fail to adjust to South Korean society because they are suspicious of South Koreans, have cultural differences in their way of thinking, face social prejudice in South Korea, have extremist political backgrounds that are either 'extreme pro-communist or extreme anti-communist', and have difficulties adopting a new set of values in South Korea.

Based on a *public opinion survey* of South Korean people's perceptions, Kim and Jang (2007) reported that North Korean refugees (new settlers) encountered difficulties such as economic, social, and emotional adjustment; lack of professional skills for finding jobs; communication barriers; and prejudice and discrimination in South Korean society. Further, the study reported that North Korean refugees' children faced maladjustment at school and had higher dropout rates. Lankov (2006) argued that the majority of North Korean refugees who arrived in South Korea after the mid-1990s (the Arduous March) came from less privileged economic backgrounds, and they had problems regarding employment, educational attainment, and social adjustment in South Korean society.

A few empirical studies have been conducted recently to explore perceived difficulties for North Korean refugees in South Korea. For instance, a study of 500 North Korean refugees found that the respondents' self-esteem and general self-efficacy played a mediating role in the association between their feelings of discrimination and psychological distress in South Korean society (Cho, 2011). The study also found that North Korean refugees' self-esteem and general self-efficacy become weaker when they felt more discriminated against, which made them less likely to adjust psychologically to South Korean society. These previous studies explored the perception of discrimination against North Korean refugees in South Korea and found that both North Koreans' and South Koreans' strong national identities played negative roles in the social adaptation of North Korean refugees.

Factors affecting refugee resettlement

The literature on refugee-receiving societies indicates that host societies' policies and reception systems determine the success of refugee integration (Korac, 2003). Previous studies have found that language, housing and employment opportunities, cultural knowledge, and social bonds are key factors in integrating refugees into host societies, especially in European countries (Bakker et al., 2014; Brunner et al., 2014; Burnett, 2015; Korac, 2003; Mulvey, 2015; Phillimore and Goodson, 2008; Valenta and Bunar, 2010). For example, in Italy, minimal financial security and integration into the labor market are important factors, and in the Netherlands, housing and a modest allowance, compulsory language training, right to work, and social networks are important policy issues for refugee integration (Korac, 2003). Evidence from Scotland presented by Ager and Strang (2008) revealed that employment possibilities, educational opportunities, social engagement, and voluntary organisations are indicators of successful integration strategy. Evidence from Europe also suggests that granting citizenship is a prerequisite to the successful integration of refugees into a host society (Ersanilli, 2010; Ryan et al., 2008; Yang, 1994). However, evidence from the Netherlands reveals that the longer the refugees stay in asylum accommodations, the less likely they are to integrate into the host society (Bakker et al., 2014).

Refugee integration is a complex but important policy objective in a host society. South Korea has a shorter history of dealing with the acceptance, integration, and settlement of refugees compared to Europe, North America, and Australia. South Korea is a signatory to the United Nations' International Convention on the Rights of Refugees in 1992, and most recently, it enacted the Refugee Act 2013, which made it the first country in East Asia to demonstrate an open avenue to integrating and resettling refugees. This study analyses the factors that determine the success of North Korean refugees' integration and their permanent settlement intention in South Korean society.

Ager and Strang (2008) proposed a comprehensive and holistic approach to understanding the complex and interdependent elements (themes) for successfully integrating refugees or immigrants into a host society. They suggested four major dimensions of the indicators of integration: *market and means*, *social connections*, *facilitators*, and *foundations*. The first dimension, *market and means*, refers to employment and welfare opportunities such as housing, health, and education opportunities. The second, *social connection*, includes social bonds, bridges, and links within and between community groups. Then, the third dimension, *facilitators* includes language, culture, local knowledge, safety, and stability. Finally, the fourth dimension is *foundation*, which refers to issues related to citizenship and rights. This approach has been examined in research on refugee integration in the U.K. (Hammond, 2013; Phillimore and Goodson, 2008), Scotland (Mulvey, 2013), Sweden, Norway (Valenta and Bunar, 2010), and New Zealand (Elliott and Yusuf, 2014). Moreover, parts of the dimensions or elements proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) have been extensively examined in relation to refugee integration in major receiving countries. This study is the first attempt to apply Ager and Strang's four themes to the resettlement of North Korean refugees (willingness to resettle permanently) in the cultural context of South Korea.

Research methods

Sample

Total samples of 405 North Korean refugees (male and female) were recruited in two major municipalities in South Korea (i.e. Seoul and Gyeonggi-do) in April and May 2014. The participants were aged 20–69 years. Due to the sensitivity of North Korean refugees' socio-economic position

in South Korea, we adopted a snowball sampling strategy. Initially, the first participant was introduced from a relevant support organisation. Then, this person introduced several more participants for the survey, who in turn recruited others. Trained researchers were employed in the data collection. They first explained the nature of the survey and then explained the confidentiality of the collected information. Korea University's Institutional Review Board approved the research protocol.

Measures

Dependent variables. The dependent variable was the 'permanent resettlement intention of North Korean refugees in South Korea'. Participants who held South Korean citizenship were asked whether they would be willing to resettle permanently in the country. 'Yes' answers were coded as 1 and 'no' answers as 0.

Independent variables. The major predictor variables were based on Ager and Strang's (2008) key themes that influence successful refugee integration: *market and means*, *foundations*, *social connections*, and *facilitators*. *Market and means* include employment status, housing, level of education in North Korea, level of education in South Korea, and self-reported perceived health status. Employment status was coded as '1' for employed and '0' for unemployed. Refugees' education in North Korea and subsequent education in South Korea was measured as a continuous variable. Their perceived health was measured from the survey items 'I am healthier than before,' 'I am healthier than North Korean women my age,' and 'I am healthier than South Korean women my age.' The participants rated their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'never' to 'yes, all the time.' The values were added and measured as a continuous variable.

Social connection includes trust in the refugees' social network. It was measured based on questions such as 'How much do you trust people in your network?' The participants answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'very much'. The aggregated values were added and measured as a continuous variable.

Facilitators include language, cultural adaptation, safety, and stability. Refugees' language difficulty was measured by the item 'I have difficulty understanding the unfamiliar language (Chinese characters or words adopted from English) used in South Korea.' A continuous variable was constructed from a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1' (almost never) to '5' (almost always). Similarly, cultural difficulty was measured using the statement 'I have difficulty in cultural adaptation.' Safety and stability were measured using the statement 'I trust South Korea.' The aggregated values of these items were measured as a continuous variable.

Foundation includes the subjective dimensions of rights and citizenship, which consist of the sense of loyalty, belonging, and self-identity of minority groups in a dominant society (De La Paz, 2012; Delanty, 2002). To measure this, the American Identity Questionnaire (Phinney et al., 1997) was used. We replaced the term 'U.S./American' with 'South Korea' to examine the subjective dimension of citizenship and rights. The instrument consisted of six items: 'I think of myself as being South Korean,' 'I feel good about being South Korean,' 'Being South Korean plays an important part in my life,' 'I feel that I am part of South Korean culture,' 'I have a strong sense of being South Korean,' and 'I am proud of being South Korean.' A 4-point Likert scale was used: '1' (never), '2' (hardly), '3' (occasionally), and '4' (often). A higher total score for the six items indicates a stronger sense of loyalty and belonging (subjective dimensions of citizenship and rights) to South Korea (the reliability Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.925).

Control variables. The control variables were age, gender, monthly income, marital status, and duration of stay in South Korea. Age was measured as a continuous variable. Male was coded as '1' and female as '0'. Monthly income was coded as a continuous variable. Married status was coded as '1' and unmarried as '0'. The duration of stay in South Korea was measured as a continuous variable.

Analysis

First, sociodemographic characteristics of the sample were examined. Second, univariate analyses (using cross-tabulation) were conducted. Differences between groups were tested using the chi-squared (χ^2) test and the *t*-test. Third, before analysing the final logistic regression model, we examined whether there were any multicollinearity problems. There was no problem of multicollinearity because the variance factor for independent variables was <2.0. Third, regardless of their level of significance in the univariate analyses, all variables were included in the final logistic regression analyses. The strength of association was estimated by the Odds Ratio (OR) with 95% Confidence Interval (CI). The statistical analyses were performed using the software SPSS for Windows (Version 21).

Results

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. There were 132 men (32.6%) and 273 women (67.4%). Respondents in their 30s made up the largest age group (120, 20.6%), followed by those in their 40s (113, 27.9%), 20s (91, 22.5%), 50s (45, 11.1%), and 60s (36, 8.9%). The average age was 40.62 ($SD = 12.43$). A majority of the respondents were married (295, 72.8%). With regard to education in North Korea, the biggest group consisted of middle/high school graduates (177, 43.7%) and college graduates (151, 37.3%). Thirty-seven percent of the respondents had a monthly household income of <1,000,000 won (US\$980), and <1% had a monthly income of >4,000,000 won. The average monthly income was 1,445,300 won. The average duration of living in South Korea was 75.79 months ($SD = 42.63$).

Table 2 presents the results of the univariate analysis (χ^2 test and the *t*-test) of the association between independent variables (socio-demographic factors and factors related to refugee integration) and the dependent variable (permanent resettlement intention). The variables of age, marital status, duration of stay in South Korea, employment status, education in South Korea, language problem, safety and stability, and rights/citizenship were associated with refugees' permanent settlement intention.

Table 3 presents factors that predict the likelihood a refugee will be willing to permanently resettle in South Korea. Model 1 includes only the control variables. In Model 1, age is positively associated with permanent resettlement intention ($OR = 1.04$; $CI = 1.01-1.07$) and duration of stay in South Korea is negatively associated with it ($OR = 0.98$; $CI = 0.98-0.99$). Model 2 presents the full model including all independent variables. The variables of a longer stay in South Korea and rights/citizenship had strong statistical associations with permanent resettlement intention. North Korean refugees who had lived longer in South Korea were less likely ($OR = 0.99$; $CI = 0.98-0.99$) to intend to settle there permanently. However, the OR for refugees who had foundations (rights/citizenship status) was 1.17 ($CI = 1.08-1.26$) for permanent resettlement intention in South Korea. Facilitation variables such as language problems and safety and stability showed weak statistical significance. Variables such as market and means and social connection did not have significant statistical association with refugees' permanent resettlement intention.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample (N = 405).

Variable	N	%	Mean	SD	Range
Gender					
Male	132	32.6			
Female	273	67.4			
Age (year):			40.62	12.42	20–69
20–29	91	22.5			
30–39	120	29.6			
40–49	113	27.9			
50–59	45	11.1			
60–69	36	8.9			
Marital Status:					
Married (including cohabitating)	295	72.8			
Single	110	27.2			
Education (North Korea):					
Uneducated	11	2.7			
Elementary	16	4.0			
Middle school/ high school	177	43.7			
College	151	37.3			
University	49	12.1			
Advanced degree	1	0.2			
Monthly income (\$):			1,445.31	99.60	120–9000
<\$1,000	150	37.0			
\$1,000–\$1,999	139	34.3			
\$2,000–\$2,999	81	20.0			
\$3,000–\$3,999	28	6.91			
\$4,000–\$4,999	4	0.98			
≥\$5,000	3	0.74			
Duration in South Korea (month)			75.79	42.63	7–201
Level of stress			3.20	3.45	0–20
Sense of equality			2.01	0.89	1–4
National image			74.39	12.22	39–100

SD: standard deviation.

Discussion

South Korea is an attractive destination for migrant workers, marriage immigrants, international students, businesspeople, and North Korean refugees. Unique among these groups, North Korean refugees have common cultural norms, language, and ethnic identity. Nevertheless, North Koreans' entrance into South Korea and adaptation to South Korean society can be stressful and traumatic. Despite this, North Korean refugees are less likely than other immigrant groups to settle permanently in South Korea. This study examined the factors that affect their permanent resettlement intention in South Korea using the theoretical framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008).

We found that a majority of the respondents were female (67.4%). This suggests that there are more female North Korean refugees in South Korea than male ones, which is consistent with the

Table 2. Univariate comparison of descriptive statistics by permanent resettlement intention among North Korean refugee in South Korea.

	Permanent Resettlement Intention		
	Yes	No	χ^2/t^a
Control Variable			
Gender:			2.49
Man	75.8	24.7	—
Women	82.4	17.6	—
Age (year)	41.82 (12.55)	35.78 (10.60)	3.97***
Monthly income (\$)	1,400.4 (93.12)	1,627.9 (121.42)	-1.84
Marital status:			8.31**
Single	70.9	29.1	
Married	83.7	16.3	
Duration in South Korea (month)	71.53	93.08	-4.129***
Independent Variable			
Markers and Means			5.87*
Employment:			
Unemployed	85.1	14.9	
Employed	75.5	24.5	
Education in North Korea	2.53 (0.87)	2.51 (0.87)	0.183
Education in South Korea	1.09 (1.84)	2.06 (2.15)	-3.71***
Perceived Health	8.93 (3.08)	8.71 (2.69)	0.627
Social Connection:			
Trust in network	19.62 (3.12)	19.60 (2.96)	0.53
Facilitators:			
Language problem	1.59 (1.17)	1.26 (1.17)	2.22*
Cultural adaptation	1.17 (1.11)	1.11 (1.02)	0.39
Safety and stability	4.17 (0.79)	3.63 (0.96)	4.72***
Foundation:			
Rights/citizenships	21.30 (3.55)	17.90 (4.50)	7.25***

^a χ^2 values for percentage difference, t-values for mean differences.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

study of Jun et al. (2015), who reported that 75.1% of North Korean refugees in South Korea are female. There are higher numbers of female refugees because women in North Korea have lower status and are less controlled and less exploited by the North Korean military system (Park, 2016). Furthermore, Park (2016) suggested that North Korean women have more autonomy for seeking economic opportunities in China. They may also attempt to enter South Korea due to the influence of South Korean movies, TV dramas, and affluent/modern lifestyle.

We found that the mean value of stress was 3.20, which indicates that the respondents had a considerable level of stress. Previous studies reported that North Korean refugees have high levels of stress during their social adaptation period in South Korea due to feeling alienated by South Koreans, experiencing feelings of loneliness and inferiority, having an uncertain future in South Korea, worrying about their family members in North Korea, and having to adjust to differences in values between South Korea and North Korea (Jeon et al., 2009). Similarly, we found that the mean value of 'sense of equality' was 2.01 (± 0.89 , range = 1–4). This finding suggests that North Korean refugees do not generally feel 'unequal' in South Korea. However, they may experience competition and social discrimination in the

Table 3. Odds ratio for the likelihood of permanent resettlement intention among North Korean refugees in South Korea.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Control Variable				
Gender	0.839	0.487, 1.445	0.920	0.502, 1.686
Age	1.041**	1.012, 1.070	1.022	0.987, 1.058
Monthly income	0.999	0.996, 1.002	0.999	0.996, 1.002
Marital status:				
Single	1.00			
Married	1.188	0.749, 1.883	1.133	0.682, 1.881
Duration in South Korea	0.988***	0.982, 0.995	0.990**	0.982, 0.997
Independent Variable				
Market and Means				
Employment:				
Unemployed			1.00	
Employed			0.778	0.508, 1.194
Education in North Korea			0.821	0.584, 1.154
Education in South Korea			0.893	0.768, 1.039
Perceived health			1.080	0.972, 1.200
Social Connection:				
Trust in network			0.926	0.841, 1.020
Facilitators:				
Language problem			1.412#	0.997, 1.998
Cultural adaptation			0.821	0.568, 1.187
Safety and stability			1.405#	0.978, 2.016
Foundation:				
Rights/citizenship			1.174***	1.088, 1.266
df	5		14	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.132***		0.292***	

CI: confidence interval; OR: odds ratio.

$p < .01$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

South Korean competitive market economy (Chung, 2008; Song, 2013). This study revealed that North Korean refugees have a strong sense of national identity as North Koreans (mean = 74.39; range = 39–100). However, Yu et al. (2012) suggested that South Korean society and the government do not provide much support in establishing North Korean refugees' national identity as South Koreans.

The results of the univariate analysis showed that higher age was positively associated with the intention to permanently resettle in South Korea. Specifically, at the univariate level, variables such as marital status, safety and stability, and rights/citizenship had a positive association with permanent resettlement intention. This is a general norm that a sense of safety and stability as well as rights and citizenship factors contribute to the permanent resettlement intention of refugees in all countries, including South Korea. However, we found that longer duration of stay in South Korea and education in South Korea had negative associations with permanent resettlement intention for the North Korean refugees. However, the statistical association between education in South Korea and permanent resettlement intention disappeared after controlling for all confounding factors (Table 3).

Nevertheless, having a longer duration of stay in South Korea was a strong predictor of refugees' being less willing to resettle permanently in South Korea even after controlling for all confounding factors.

The results of the logistic regression provided two key findings. The first is that the longer North Korean refugees stay in South Korea, the less likely they are to resettle permanently. The second, refugees who have facilities such as rights and citizenship are more likely to stay in South Korea as permanent residents. These findings have important policy and practice implications for integrating North Korean refugees into South Korea. It may be that the longer refugees stay in South Korea, the more they may feel discrimination from South Koreans. The second finding supports Ager and Strang's (2008) proposition that 'foundations' for refugee integration, such as issues belonging to the subjective dimensions of *citizenship* and *rights*, are major themes for successful refugee resettlement in a host society. Seol and Skrentny (2009) concluded that immigrants in Korea (and Japan also) are less settled in comparison to immigrants in other European countries. Although North Korean refugees are granted legal and political citizenship in South Korea (Lee, 2015), they are not able to satisfy full sociocultural citizenship in South Korean society (Kongdan and Hassig, 2002; Lee, 2015; Yoon, 2011).

The South Korean government has allocated a large budget to resettling North Korean refugees. However, because the supporting policies have strengthened the binary structure of 'donors' and 'recipients', even though the 'donors' believe that they provide ample aid, it does not satisfy the needs of the 'recipients'. The South Korean public considers support for North Korean refugees to be an extra burden, whereas North Korean refugees perceive support from the South Korean government as their right (Kim and Choi, 2011). As the results from Tables 2 and 3 suggest, the longer North Korean refugees stay in South Korea, the less likely they will be to intend to resettle in South Korea. This may be because North Korean refugees do not feel that they are accepted as true South Koreans despite receiving material benefits from the South Korean government and becoming South Korean citizens. In other words, they do not form a positive identity as South Koreans (Kim and Choi, 2011). It is likely that they have a strong perception of themselves as different from South Korean people rather than having a growing sense of belonging to South Korean society as they live in South Korea longer. It should be taken as an important point that the longer North Korean refugees live in South Korea, the less they want to permanently settle there. This suggests that the refugees' expectations for living in South Korean are not fulfilled, and they are dissatisfied.

Based on the findings of this study, it is urgent to enhance North Korean refugees' identity and sense of belonging as South Korean citizens. They want to be active citizens of South Korea rather than living passively on support from the South Korean government. According to a recent report, North Korean refugees living in South Korea preferred human service jobs, saying that they wanted to be recognised by South Korean people as offering help to and serving South Korean society, not as emigrating due to hunger and a need for help (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2012). The point that citizenship and rights form the foundation for North Korean refugees to settle in South Korean society is an important note.

North Korean refugees desperately need education about democratic civil society to become subjective citizens of South Korea. This is because they have been brainwashed into idolising Kim Il Sung and his family since childhood. If they live in South Korea without education about liberal democracy, they might pursue only their individual economic interests and eventually feel increasing relative deprivation and dissatisfaction with life. Intervention programmes for enhancing individual autonomy of judgment and decision-making skills must be developed and implemented (Park, 2012). South Koreans also need to enhance a positive perception, tolerance, and respect for the North Korean refugee community. For this, continuous and comprehensive civic education is needed. Therefore, we propose designing multicultural education into the regular courses in public

education to provide a positive perspective on North Korean refugees. At the same time, special classes need to be provided to North Korean refugees about modern values and liberal democracy, to enable them to integrate successfully into the competitive South Korean market.

Opportunities for South Korean citizens and North Korean refugees to come together, to share their experiences or opinions on community development, are recommended. Such community-sponsored plans need to be well practiced. For example, a welfare centre in Incheon City, South Korea, organised a programme called 'Kimjang' (preparing *kimchi* for winter), in which North Korean refugees and South Korean locals make *kimchi* to share with low-income families. North Korean refugees reported that after participating in this programme, they felt happy as well as a sense of belonging to South Korean society.

Although the statistical significance is rather low ($p < 0.1$), the results of this study indicate that language problems and safety and stability affect whether North Korean refugees intend to settle permanently in South Korea. It is easy to overlook their language problems because the refugees speak Korean. However, they sometimes feel distressed because they have a hard accent and are not familiar with South Koreans' frequent use of Chinese characters and English (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2012). Opportunities for language training must be more broadly provided so that North Korean refugees can communicate smoothly with South Korean citizens. For example, the HANA Centre can provide training on the South Korean accent and pronunciation. The South Korean government should focus on overcoming cultural differences between South Koreans and North Korean refugees, and related research and programme development should be promoted.

This study has some limitations. For example, it does not examine emotional or psychological aspects of integration, even though North Korean refugees have high levels of psychological distress including stress, depression, and PTSD (Kim and Atteraya, 2015). Further study is needed to understand the relationship between different psychological aspects of the integration process of North Korean refugees in South Korea. Another limitation is that Ager and Strang's theory has been criticised for not being able to provide a local level definition of refugee integration (Vrečer, 2010). In addition, the willingness of refugees to settle permanently in South Korea is a self-reported intention, not an actual resettlement. Therefore, we recommend carrying out a qualitative study to explore factors that affect the actual resettlement of North Korean refugees in South Korea. The findings of the study only intend to measure the North Korean refugee's intention to resettle in South Korea, not about the refugees coming from countries other than North Korea. The discussion about integration policy strategies between North Korean refugees and refugees from other than North Korea is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, we suggest further investigation into this issue.

Conclusion

We found that the longer North Korean refugees stay in South Korea, the less likely that they want to resettle in South Korea permanently. Refugees who have higher scores in the subjective dimensions of rights and citizenship are more likely to intend to resettle in South Korea as permanent residents. Therefore, in designing social policies to permanently resettle North Korean refugees in South Korea, issues such as a refugee's sense of belonging and loyalty to South Korean society need to be prioritised.

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We used primary data for this study; therefore we would like to provide the link page that connects the SPSS data file and the command to allow replications. Please check the following link pages.

For data:

<https://tinyurl.com/yd3k2u6d>.

For SPSS command:

<https://tinyurl.com/y8pxswj7>.

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ORCID iD

Madhu Sudhan Atteraya  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8085-6786>.

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Author biographies

Hee Jin Kim, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Science of Community (studies of vulnerable classes and minority groups) at Myongji University in South Korea. She has researched comprehensively on family and youth welfare, family violence, women’s issues, family therapy, mental health, social adaptation, and North Korean refugees’ issues.

Madhu Sudhan Atteraya, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Social Welfare at Keimyung University, Daegu, South Korea. His research areas include family welfare, equity in health care, social justice, migration and integration, and international maternal, newborn and child health.